

# *Conduct of the Offensive:*

## *1st Far Eastern Front*

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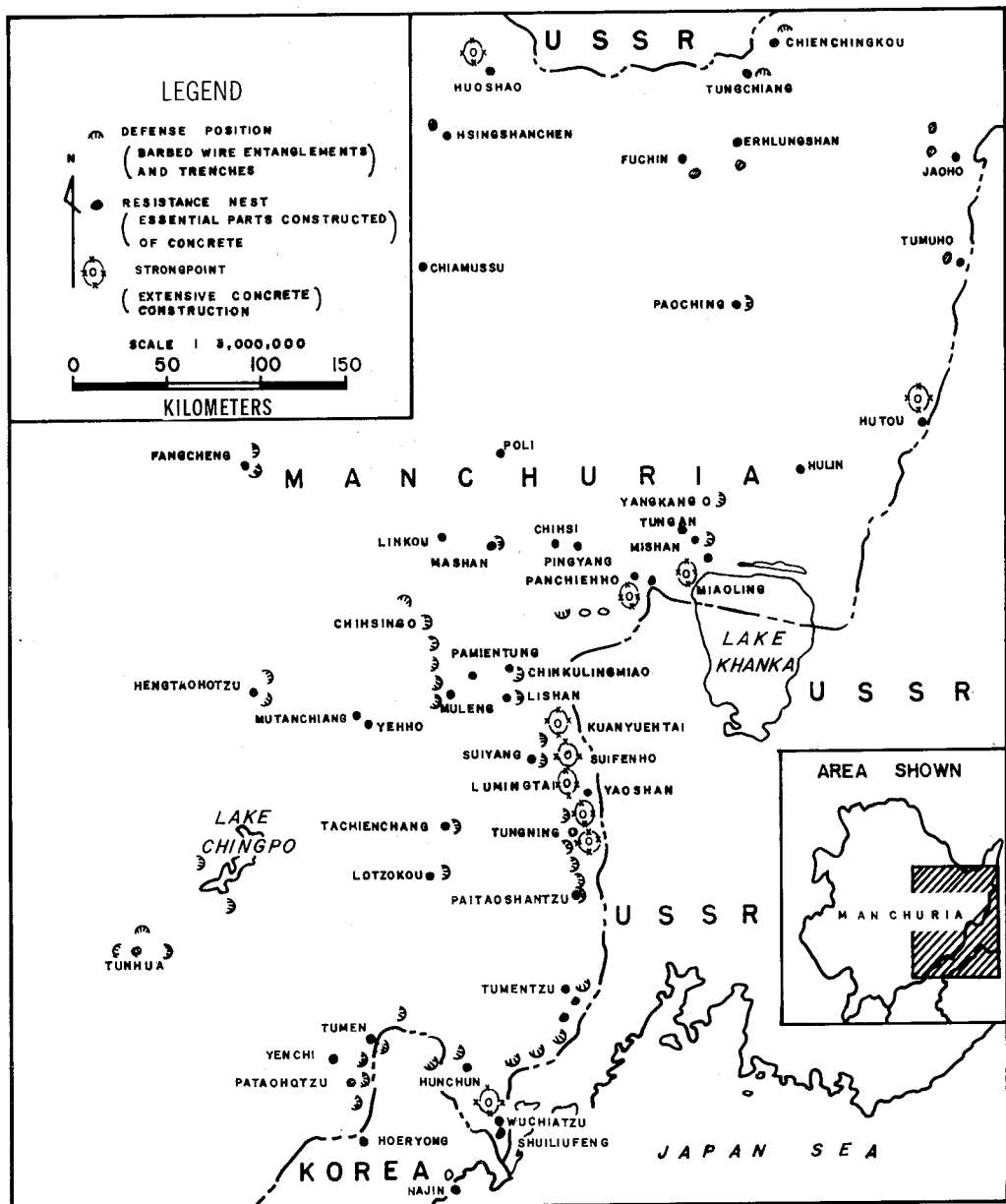


Marshal Meretskov's 1st Far Eastern Front faced conditions that differed significantly from those of the Trans-Baikal Front. The frontage of the 1st Far Eastern Front, running from the Ussuri River town of Iman, north of Lake Khanka, to the Sea of Japan, was shorter than that of the Trans-Baikal Front. The Japanese border districts of eastern Manchuria were more heavily fortified than those in the west. Some of the fortification complexes were large, sophisticated, reinforced concrete structures. Although lightly held, they covered virtually all good avenues of approach and routes of communication into eastern Manchuria by way of Jaoho, Hutou, Suifen-hò, Tungning, and Hunchun. Japanese forces in eastern Manchuria held the border regions with small covering forces and planned to concentrate the bulk of their forces in defensive lines eighty kilometers west of the border (see maps 26—29).

Thus, the Soviet task was to penetrate the border regions quickly by traversing terrain the Japanese considered too difficult for large-scale movement, to bypass and isolate frontier fortifications, to drive deeply and quickly into eastern Manchuria, and to preempt Japanese establishment of a viable defense west of the border.

Soaked by inundating thunderstorms, 1st Far Eastern Front advanced in the worst of weather conditions in the dark of night. Along virtually the entire front, forces advanced under cover of rain without support of an artillery preparation except at Hutou, in the northern part of 35th Army sector. Rain persisted from after midnight till about 0600 on the ninth. The Soviet attack under such miserable conditions compounded the surprise of the Japanese and led to quick reduction of many unsuspecting Japanese border posts.

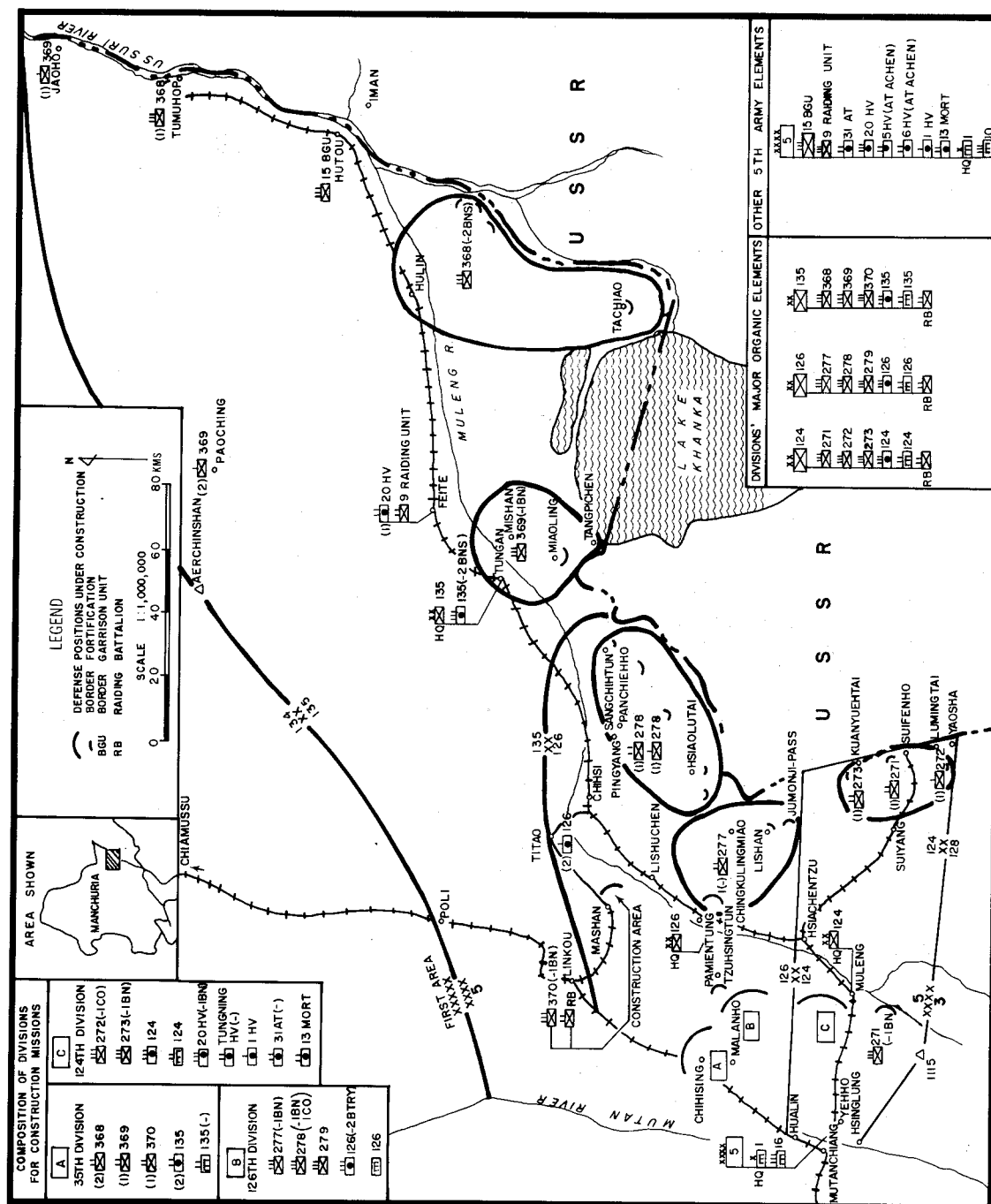
At 0030, front reconnaissance units began the advance across the border in heavy thunderstorms. Assault units and advanced battalions followed at 0100 to secure Japanese fortified strongpoints and outposts and to cut lanes through the obstacle belts for the main front forces. Main force regiments of each army led the main attack at 0830.



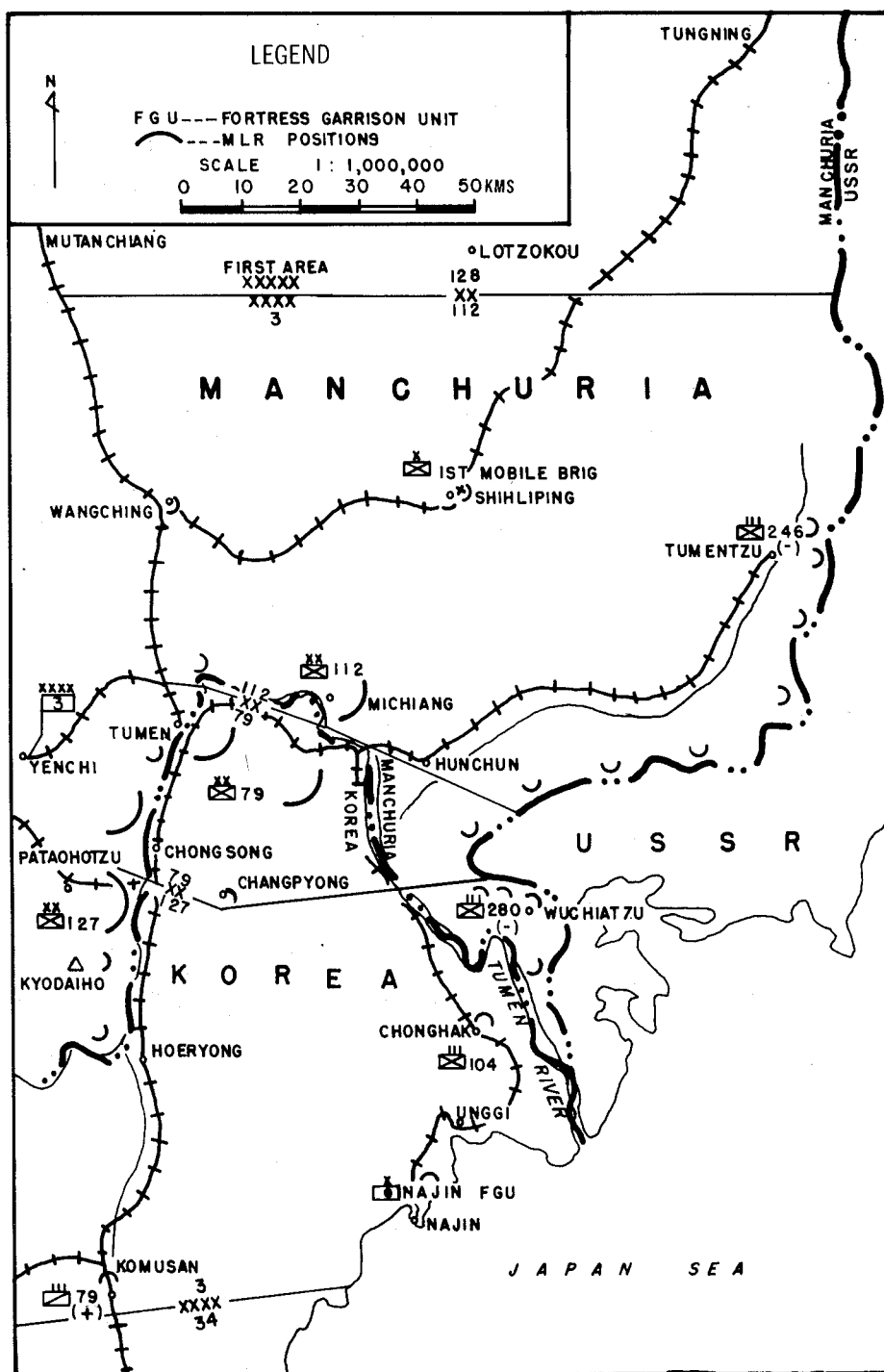
Map 26. Japanese Fortified Positions in Eastern Manchuria

The 5th Army of Col. Gen. N. I. Krylov launched the main attack of the 1st Far Eastern Front.<sup>1</sup> With three rifle corps abreast (17th Rifle Corps on the left, 72d Rifle Corps in the center, and 65th Rifle Corps on the right), the attack struck the front and northern flank of the Volynsk (Kuanyuehtai) center of resistance,\* held by one battalion of the Japanese

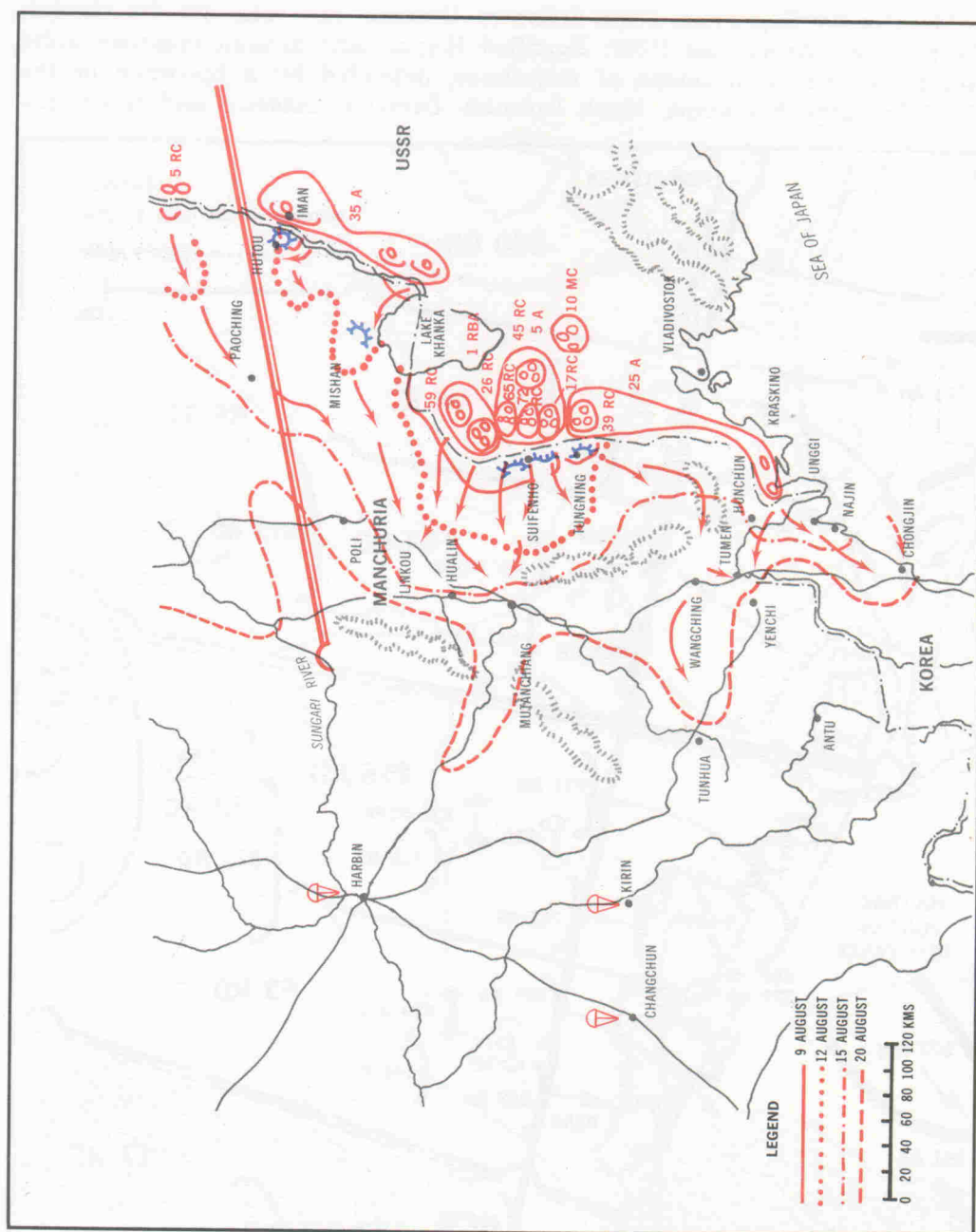
\*By Soviet definition, a fortified region contained several centers of resistance. Each center of resistance consisted of fortified points, pillboxes, and trench systems.



Map 27. Japanese 5th Army Defense Area

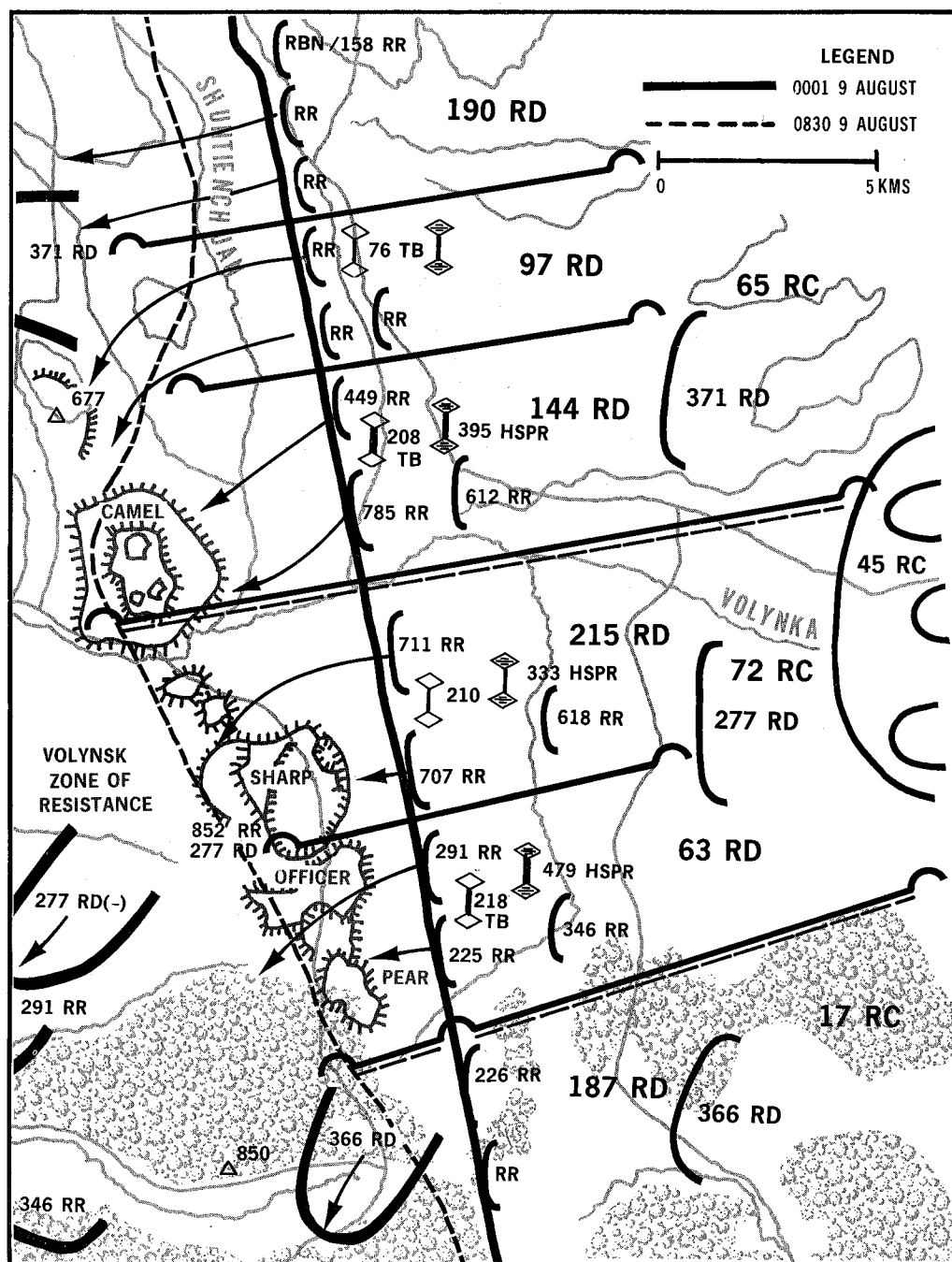


Map 28. Japanese 3d Army Defense Area



Map 29. Soviet 1st Far Eastern Front Operations, 9–20 August 1945

273d Infantry Regiment, 124th Infantry Division (see map 30). On the left flank of 5th Army, the 105th Fortified Region and assault engineer units struck the Suifenho center of resistance, defended by a battalion of the 371st Infantry Regiment, 124th Infantry Division. Assault and reconnais-



Map 30. Soviet 5th Army Main Attack Sector, 0001–0830, 9 August 1945

sance units from lead rifle regiments' advanced battalions attacked at 0100, and they disrupted Japanese forward defenses in four hours of combat. At 0830 first echelon rifle regiments followed the assault units into the attack. One tank brigade and one heavy self-propelled artillery regiment supported the first echelon regiments of each rifle division on the main axis of advance. The attack progressed quickly. The 72d Rifle Corps in 5th Army's center assaulted and secured some of the Volynsk fortifications. After leaving second echelon units to reduce remaining positions, the corps penetrated four to five kilometers beyond the fortified zone. At 1500, with a tank brigade in the lead, corps units pushed westward into the Japanese rear toward Laotsaiying (see map 31). The 65th Rifle Corps, on the right flank of 5th Army, enveloped the northern portion of the Volynsk center of resistance. Leaving isolated Japanese units in the rear for second echelon units to deal with, the corps, led by a tank brigade as forward detachment, advanced northwestward towards Machiacho station. The 17th Rifle Corps, on 5th Army's left flank, attacked through a weak sector of Japanese defenses and swung southwestward around the northernmost Japanese fortifications of the Suifenho center of resistance. Assault engineer units and fortified region units seized the critical railroad tunnels on the main rail line into Manchuria by way of Suifenho.<sup>2</sup>

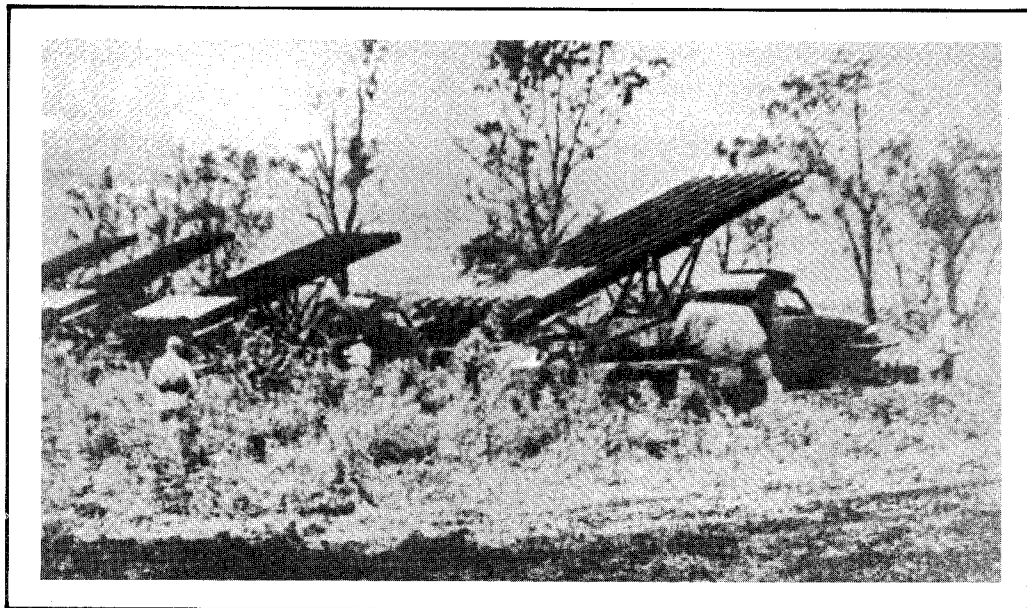


**Krylov, Nicolai Ivanovich (1903—72), 5th Army**

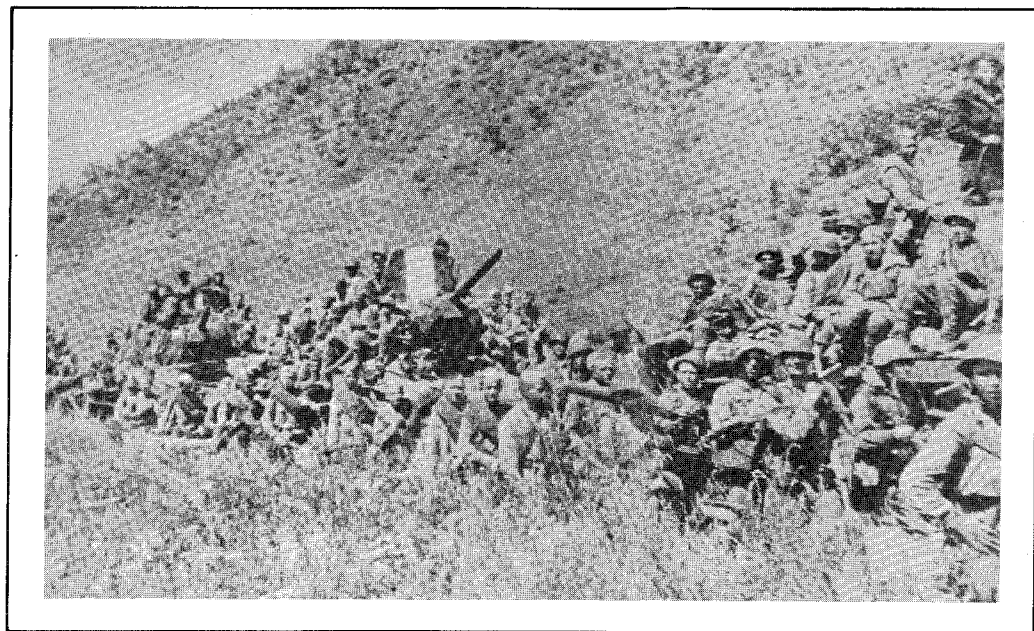
- 1919—joined Red Army; platoon and company commander (N. Caucasus). Battalion commander, 2d Trans-Baikal Rifle Division (Vladivostok).
- 1920—Infantry/Machine Gun Course of Red Commanders.
- 1920-40—staff and command positions (Far East).
- 1928—Vystrel course.
- 1941—chief of staff, Danube Fortified Region; chief, Operations Department; chief of staff, Maritime Army (Odessa, Sevastopol).
- 1942—(Sep) chief of staff, 62d Army (Stalingrad operation).
- 1943—(Apr) chief of staff, 8th Guards Army.
- 1943—(Jul) commander, 21st Army.
- 1943—(Oct) commander, 5th Army (Belorussia, E. Prussia operation).
- 1945—deputy commander, Maritime Military District.
- 1947—commander, Far East Military District.
- 1953—first deputy commander, Far East Military District.
- 1956—commander, Ural Military District.
- 1957—commander, Leningrad Military District.
- 1960—commander, Moscow Military District.
- 1963—(Mar) commander, strategic rocket forces and deputy minister of defense.

By nightfall on 9 August the three corps of 5th Army had torn a gaping hole thirty-five kilometers wide in the Japanese defensive lines and had advanced sixteen to twenty-two kilometers into the Japanese rear area. The 45th Rifle Corps in army second echelon followed the advancing units. Reinforced by sappers and self-propelled artillery, rifle regiments from the second echelon of each forward division reduced remaining Japanese strongpoints in the Volynsk, Suifenho, and Lumintai centers of resistance. Soviet

forces liquidated all such positions within three days. Japanese units at Suiyang, in the rear of the fortified zones, withdrew to the Muleng area to join the main forces of 124th Infantry Division in defensive positions.



"Katiushas" fire on Japanese positions

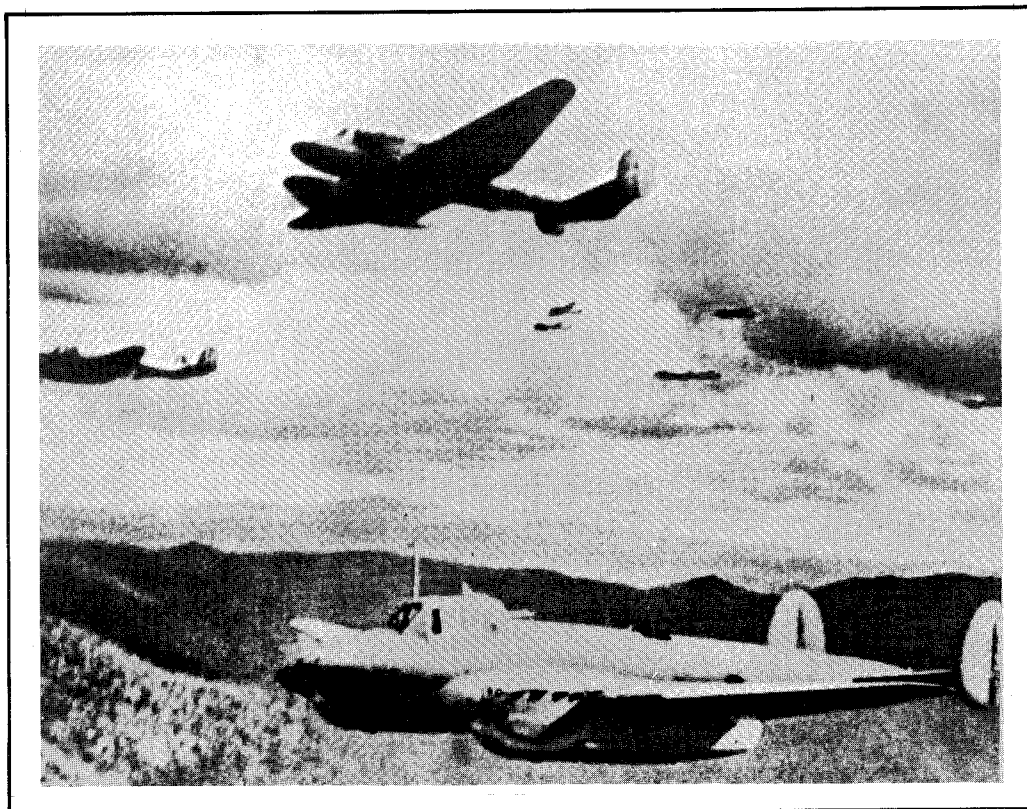


On the road to Mutanchiang



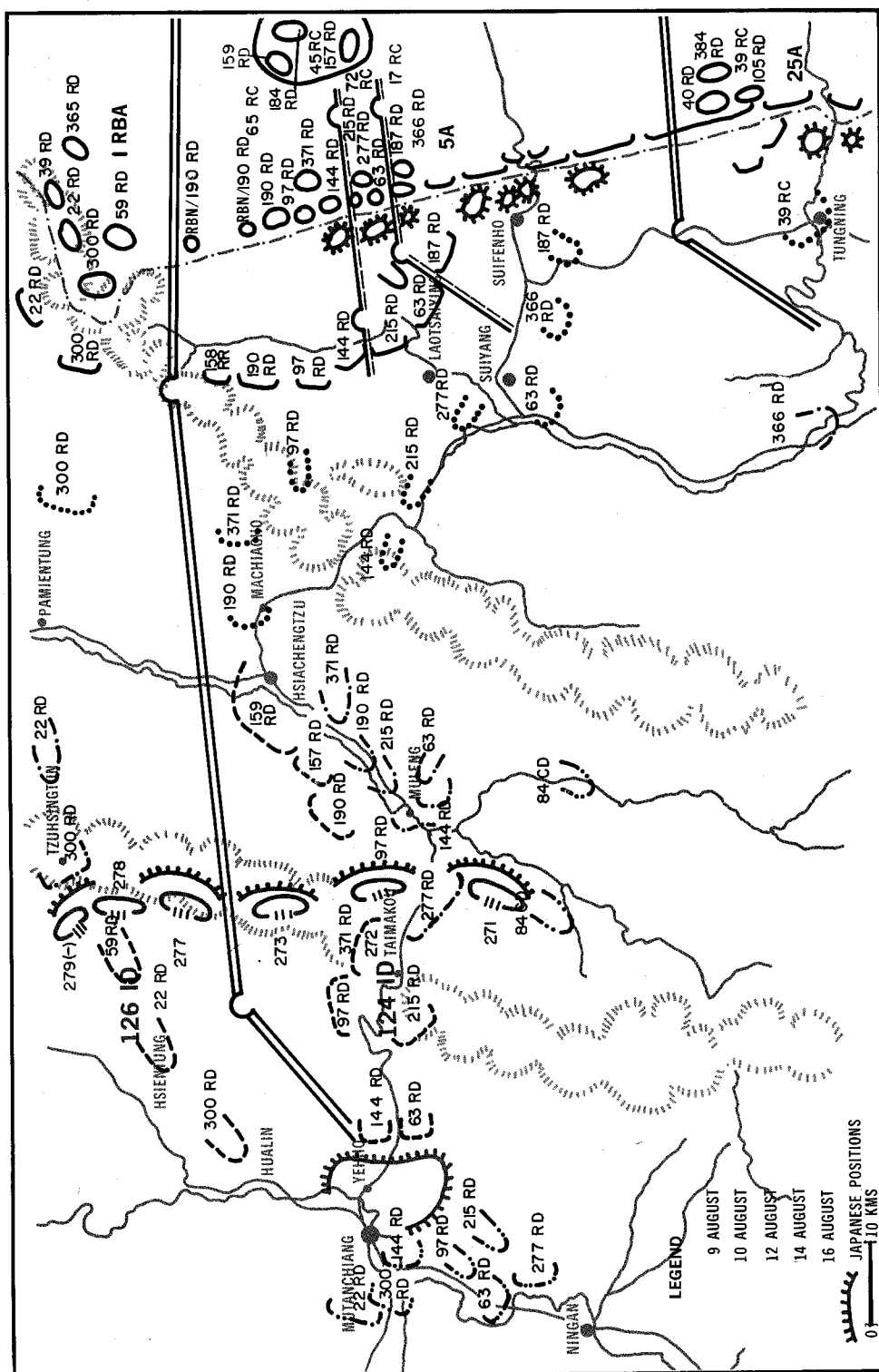


The following day, 5th Army units advanced rapidly westward and southward in the rear of other Japanese fortified regions in the area (see map 32). Japanese units initiated a general withdrawal to a north-south line west of Muleng. In these planned positions, the Japanese 124th Infantry Division prepared to defend against 5th Army.<sup>3</sup> Throughout 10 August, 5th Army units advanced eighteen to thirty kilometers and widened the zone of penetration to seventy-five kilometers. Main elements of 65th Rifle Corps,



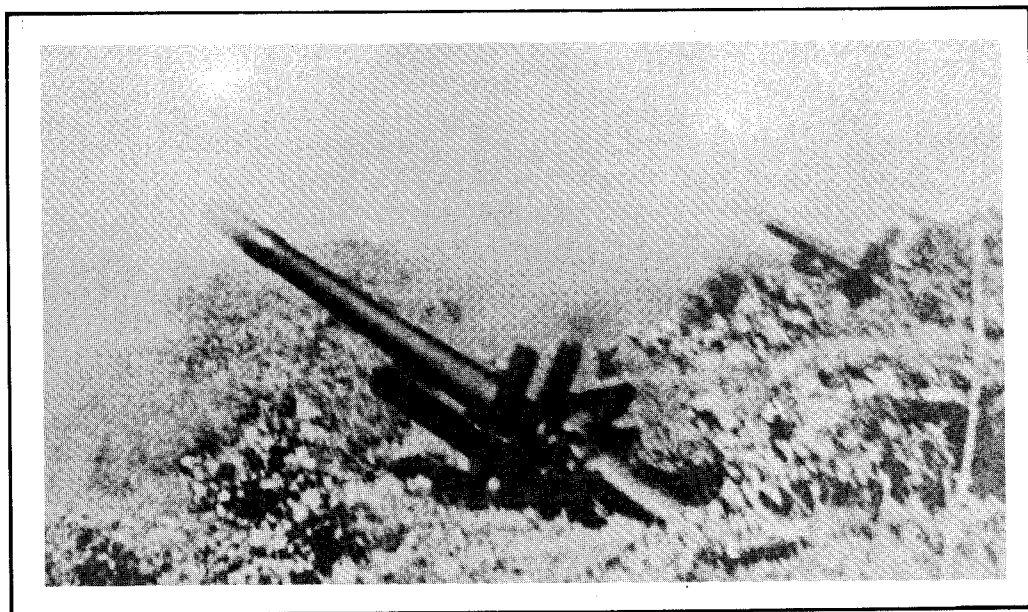
Soviet bombers over Manchuria

led by a tank brigade, marched in column northwestward toward Machiacho station. The 72d Rifle Corps, in a column of regiments also led by a tank brigade, advanced along the rail line northwestward toward Hsiachengtzu on the Muleng River, and the 17th Rifle Corps moved southward in the rear of the Lumintai center of resistance to join forces with 39th Rifle Corps units of 25th Army, operating farther south. The 63d Rifle Division of 72d Rifle Corps and a tank brigade swung southward and then northwestward toward Muleng in order to envelop withdrawing Japanese forces. At 1700 on the tenth, in a planned adjustment of his forces, the front commander, Marshal Meretskov, detached 17th Rifle Corps from 5th Army and subordinated it to 25th Army.<sup>4</sup>



Map 32. Soviet 5th Army Advance to Mutanchiang, 9-12 August 1945

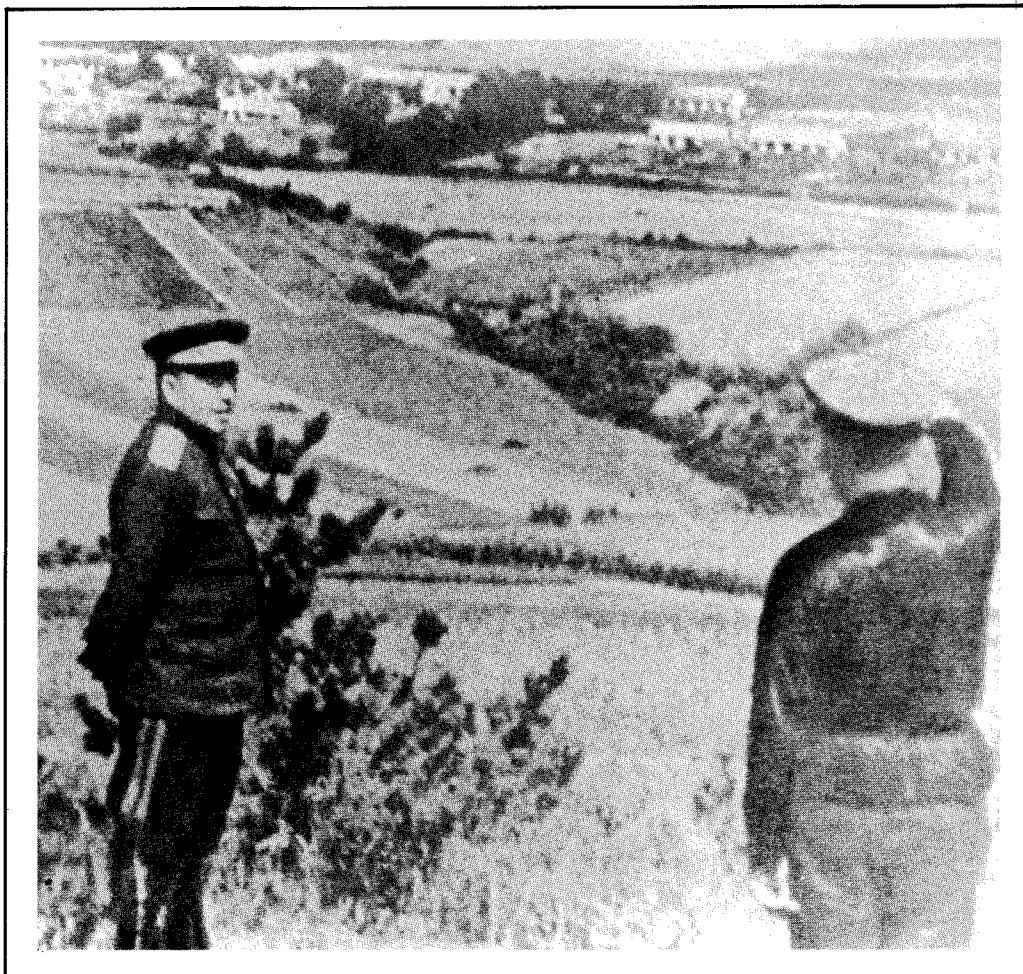
The 5th Army advance continued on the eleventh, and reinforced forward detachments of the 65th and 72d Rifle Corps reached the Muleng River, an objective initially scheduled for the eighth day of the operation. Marshal Meretskov, impressed by the progress of 5th Army, ordered acceleration of the advance on Mutanchiang (an objective for the seventeenth day).<sup>5</sup> Responding to Meretskov's order, General Krylov of 5th Army created a strong army forward detachment made up of the 76th Tank Brigade, a heavy self-propelled artillery regiment, and two rifle battalions, and dispatched them in a dash along the road to Mutanchiang. The forward detachment advanced on the night of 11–12 August, and 5th Army divisions followed in march column. On the morning of the twelfth, heavy counterattacks by the Sasaki Detachment (two infantry battalions from the 135th Infantry Division), attached to the Japanese 124th Infantry Division, halted and inflicted heavy casualties on the Soviet forward detachment east of Taimakou.<sup>6</sup> Additional reinforcements arrived from the 144th and 97th Rifle Divisions, and after a thirty-minute artillery preparation, 5th Army units cut a four-kilometer swath through Japanese positions and continued their march toward Mutanchiang.



Heavy artillery pounds Japanese positions

On 13 August the advance continued thirty kilometers in a corridor five to seven kilometers wide along the road and rail line to Mutanchiang. The 144th and 63d Rifle Divisions, with tank brigades as forward detachments, led the advance. Other Soviet divisions stretched out sixty kilometers along the main road to the rear, clearing the area north and south of the highway. Battered and bypassed units of the Japanese 124th Infantry Division withdrew in some confusion into the hills north of the highway, later infiltrated southwest through the hills, and surrendered on 22 August to

Soviet forces at Ningen, southwest of Mutanchiang.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, the Japanese 126th Infantry Division and 135th Infantry Division (-), after withdrawing from positions north of 5th Army's zone of advance, moved to Mutanchiang, where they set up a defensive perimeter.



Commander of 1st Red Banner Army, Col. Gen. A. P. Beloborodov, observes pre-offensive exercises

**Beloborodov, Afanasii Pavlant'evich (1903—?), 1st Red Banner Army**

- 1919—(Nov) Uvarov Partisan Detachment in Irkutsk. Commanded rifle platoon.  
 1923—joined Red Army.  
 1923—Nizhnegorod Infantry School.  
 1929—F. Engels military political course.  
 1929—political officer, rifle company, 197th Rifle Regiment (Far East).  
 1930—service in Far East.  
 1936—Frunze Academy.  
 1936-39—deputy commander, chief of operations, 66th Rifle Division (Separate Red Banner Far Eastern Army).  
 1939—(Mar) chief of operations, 31st Rifle Corps.  
 1939—(Jun) chief of staff, 43d Rifle Corps.  
 1941—(Jan) chief, Training Department, Far Eastern Front.  
 1941—(Jul) commander, 78th Rifle Division.  
 1941—(Nov) commander, 9th Guards Rifle Division (Moscow operations).  
 1942—(Sep) commander, 5th Guards Rifle Corps (Veliki-Luki operation).  
 1943—(Aug) commander, 2d Guards Rifle Corps (Nevel, Vitebsk operation).  
 1944—(May) commander, 43d Army (E. Prussia operations).  
 1945—(Jun) commander, 1st Red Banner Army.  
 1946-47—commander, Guards Army.  
 1947-53—commander, 39th Army (Port Arthur).  
 1953—chief, military training administration of ground forces; chief of *Vystrel* course; assistant commander, Central Group of Forces.  
 1955—commander, Voronezh Military District.  
 1957—chief, Main Cadre Administration, and Member of Kollegia of the Ministry of Defense.  
 1963—commander, Moscow Military District.  
 1968—inspector and advisor, Group of General Inspectors, Ministry of Defense.

At nightfall on 13 August, after repelling many Japanese platoon- to battalion-size harassing attacks, 5th Army units approached the outer fortifications of Mutanchiang, having widened their advance corridor to twelve or thirteen kilometers.<sup>8</sup> The stage was now set for one of the few multi-division set-piece battles in the Manchurian campaign.

The 1st Red Banner Army supported the 5th Army attack by advancing on its right (northern) flank (see map 33). The 1st Red Banner Army's zone of operation extended from the right flank of 5th Army, through the heavily forested mountain regions to the north and northwest and eastward across the open country bordering the Tigra River valley to Lake Khanka. Opposite 1st Red Banner Army, Japanese border units and elements of the 135th Infantry Division defended a string of platoon- to battalion-strength outposts. The easternmost outposts were heavily fortified southern extensions of the Mishan Fortified Region.<sup>9</sup> Col. Gen. Beloborodov, commander of the 1st Red Banner Army, concentrated his forces in two corps (26th Rifle Corps on the left, 59th Rifle Corps on the right) for a main attack in a sixteen-kilometer sector in the left half of the army zone. In the remainder of his army zone eastward to Lake Khanka, he deployed the reinforced 112th Fortified Region and the 6th Field Fortified Region.\* The mission of the army main attack force was to penetrate the ten- to fifteen-kilometer, heavily forested, hilly region immediately facing the army sector and to continue the attack along two axes across relatively open country to secure Pamientung and Lishuchen on the Muleng River. The army would then continue the attack southwest toward Mutanchiang and northwest to Linkou. The fortified regions on the army's right flank would conduct small-scale supporting attacks on Japanese installations south of Mishan in concert with forces of 35th Army operating toward Mishan from the east. Eventually, 1st Red Banner Army would unite with 5th Army units at Mutanchiang and with 35th Army units at Mishan and Linkou.<sup>10</sup>

The 1st Red Banner Army's chief obstacle was the heavily wooded terrain now wet from heavy rains. Enemy opposition amounted to Japanese platoon and company outposts on the border and a few battalion-size positions in the more open country fifteen to twenty kilometers west of the border. Advancing Soviet rifle divisions would have to build roads through the forest as they advanced, so they needed heavy engineer support and a carefully organized march column formation. In 26th Rifle Corps zone, 300th Rifle Division and 22d Rifle Division led the advance, while in 59th Rifle Corps zone, 39th and 231st Rifle Divisions led. Tank brigades followed the advanced divisions of each corps to take the lead when each corps completed passage over the difficult terrain to the corps's immediate front. Two rifle divisions were in the corps second echelons.

\*A field fortified region consisted of machinegun and artillery battalions (like a regular fortified region). Assigned vehicles permitted the field fortified region to undertake mobile tactical operations (unlike the fortified region).

The attack by 1st Red Banner Army coincided with the attack by 5th Army. Although heavy rains forced cancellation of an artillery preparation illuminated by searchlights, assault units led the attack at 0100 on 9 August. Advanced battalions of each lead rifle division and the division itself followed in multiple march columns (three march columns from the 300th Rifle Division, two from the 22d Rifle Division, and two from the 39th Rifle Division).<sup>\*</sup> The columns constructed and widened the road as they advanced.<sup>11</sup> By nightfall on 9 August, forward divisional elements were five to six kilometers deep into Manchuria and had crossed the first obstacle, the Shitouho River, and half the forested region. During the night the main forces closed on the advanced elements, and the tank brigades prepared to take the lead.

On the morning of the tenth, road building continued, and by late morning all forces had broken through to open country. Now leading, the tank brigades pushed rapidly westward. In 26th Rifle Corps sector, the 257th Tank Brigade preceded the 300th Rifle Division and on its right the 22d Rifle Division. The 75th Tank Brigade preceded the 39th Rifle Division of 59th Rifle Corps, followed by the 365th Rifle Division. After a battle with elements of the 277th Infantry Regiment of the Japanese 126th Infantry Division, the Soviet 257th Tank Brigade, 300th Rifle Division, and 22d Rifle Division swept aside the opposition and at 2100 occupied portions of the city of Pamientung and the important bridge across the Muleng River.<sup>12</sup> The main force of 26th Rifle Corps arrived in Pamientung on the eleventh, after a gain of forty-five kilometers in three days. By the time the corps had seized the city, the 257th Tank Brigade and elements of the 300th Rifle Division were marching west and southwest in pursuit of withdrawing Japanese forces. To the north, 75th Tank Brigade duplicated the feat of 257th Tank Brigade by securing the bridge across the Muleng River at Lishuchen. The next morning, 39th Rifle Division arrived in Lishuchen, and the pursuit of Japanese forces began toward Linkou.

On 1st Red Banner Army's right flank, 112th Fortified Region and 6th Field Fortified Region forces, reinforced by a rifle regiment of 59th Rifle Corps, stormed several Japanese border positions held by elements of the 369th Infantry Regiment of the Japanese 135th Infantry Division and slowly advanced northward toward Mishan. At nightfall on 11 August the units crossed the Muleng River south of Mishan and in the ensuing days cooperated with 35th Army units in securing the Mishan Fortified Region.

Japanese 126th and 135th Infantry Divisions, responsible for the Pamientung-Mishan sectors, withdrew rapidly after the Soviet attack. The Japanese intent was to occupy planned defensive positions on a north-south line adjacent to the positions of 124th Infantry Division east of Mutanchiang. The 126th Infantry Division defended near Tzuhsingtun, and the

<sup>\*</sup>No information available on the march configuration of the 231st Rifle Division.

135th Infantry Division occupied positions at Chihsing, thus covering the city of Mutanchiang from the north and northwest. The Japanese offered only token opposition to Soviet forces thrusting towards Linkou.<sup>13</sup>

Having secured Lishuchen and Pamientung, Soviet 1st Red Banner Army forces relentlessly drove on, virtually preempting Japanese defensive designs. The 257th Tank Brigade with the 300th Rifle Division of 26th Rifle Corps encountered, enveloped, and bypassed units of the Japanese 126th Infantry Division at Tzuhsingtun and pushed on to Hsientung, where on the afternoon of the twelfth, they cut the Linkou-Mutanchiang railroad line and enveloped and drove off another Japanese unit. By this time the brigade was down to nineteen serviceable tanks.<sup>14</sup> In spite of its reduced strength, the unit moved on in an attempt to secure the rail bridge across the Mutan River at Hualin, some ten kilometers to the south. At 0500 on 13 August, the 257th Tank Brigade, from march formation, occupied the railroad station at Hualin. The critical railroad bridge was just two kilometers south of the station. The brigade dashed for the bridge, which blew up with a roar before the brigade could reach it. All day, against heavy opposition by the Takikawa Infantry Battalion of the 370th Regiment of the Japanese 135th Infantry Division, the brigade tried without success to secure crossing sites over the Mutan River.<sup>15</sup> During the battle, a train entering Hualin from the north carried the commander of the 135th Infantry Division, his staff, and elements of an infantry regiment. Although the 257th Tank Brigade destroyed much of the train, the Japanese general escaped on foot to the Japanese lines.<sup>16</sup> At 1800 on 13 August, the tank brigade withdrew to the outskirts of Hualin under heavy Japanese attack. During the night the unit broke out of a ring of Japanese troops, set up defenses on the hill northeast of Hualin, and waited for reinforcements. Other Soviet troops were marching southwest from Pamientung and Tzuhsingtun on two separate routes to assist the 257th Tank Brigade. The 300th Rifle Division and the 22d Rifle Division of the 26th Rifle Corps marched on the southern route, and the 77th Tank Brigade and the 59th Rifle Division followed on the northern route.

On the 1st Red Banner Army's right (northern) wing, the 75th Tank Brigade and the 39th Rifle Division of the 59th Rifle Corps reached and secured Linkou on 13 August. Elements of the 370th Infantry Regiment, 135th Japanese Infantry Division, and the division headquarters withdrew south towards Chihsing and Mutanchiang. The 369th Infantry Regiment remained north of Linkou and on 17 August retreated westward to Erhtaotzu. The 75th Tank Brigade and the 39th Rifle Division turned south toward Mutanchiang, leaving the 365th Rifle Division to pursue the Japanese 369th Infantry Regiment from Linkou. On 14 August the stage was set for battle to begin at Mutanchiang. The Japanese 126th Infantry Division and major elements of the 135th Infantry Division were now positioned to defend against 1st Red Banner Army units advancing from the north and 5th Army units advancing from the east in an effort to seize the critical communications junction and headquarters of First Area Army.



The battle for Mutanchiang raged for two days.<sup>17</sup> The 22d and 300th Rifle Divisions of 1st Red Banner Army, supported by the 77th and 257th Tank Brigades, attacked the northern and eastern flanks of the city and the railroad station at Yehho on the east bank of the Mutan River. Striking the Japanese right flank at Ssutaoling and in the hills southeast of the city, 5th Army units supported the drive. Ultimately, 1st Red Banner Army units cleared the city by the evening of 16 August, and 5th Army units skirted south of the city to continue the advance southwestward toward Ningan. The Japanese 126th and 135th Infantry Divisions withdrew westward to Hengtaohotzu during the evening of 16 August. Elements of both divisions, in particular the 278th Infantry Regiment of the 126th Infantry Division and the Takikawa Battalion of the 135th Infantry Division, did not get the order to withdraw. The 278th Infantry Regiment was destroyed almost to a man in the Soviet capture of Mutanchiang. The Takikawa Battalion disbanded and infiltrated to the rear in small groups.<sup>18</sup>

After the fall of Mutanchiang, 1st Red Banner Army units began an advance northwest of the city in the direction of Harbin. The 5th Army advanced southwestward toward Ningan, Tunghua, and Kirin. On 17 August, 1st Red Banner Army units covered fourteen kilometers, driving small enemy groups out of their path. The 72d Rifle Corps of 5th Army marched southward on the east bank of the Mutan River and unsuccessfully attempted to cross the river north of Ningan. On the night of 17–18 August the 277th Rifle Division conducted a successful night river crossing against heavy Japanese opposition. The next day the remainder of 72d Rifle Corps crossed the Mutan River. On the eighteenth, with the final announcement of Japanese capitulation, 1st Red Banner Army and 5th Army units deployed to receive and process surrendering Japanese units. On 20 August forward detachments of 1st Red Banner Army reached Harbin, where they united with Soviet air-landed forces and with amphibious forces of 15th Army, 2d Far Eastern Front.<sup>19</sup>

In the northern sector of the 1st Far Eastern Front, north of Lake Khanka and on the right of 1st Red Banner Army, 35th Army deployed to attack westward (see map 34). The conditions in this sector were quite different from those in other sectors. The 35th Army's mission was to secure the Hutou and Mishan Fortified Regions and the cities of Poli and Linkou. In order to secure those objectives, Soviet forces would have to negotiate the Ussuri and Sungacha rivers, cross the marshy regions between Lake Khanka and the Sungacha and Muleng rivers, and overcome the Hutou and Mishan Fortified Regions. The Japanese defended Hutou with the 15th Border Guard Unit and the 368th Infantry Regiment of the 135th Infantry Division deployed in strongpoints of company-strength along the western bank of the Sungacha River. The remainder of 135th Infantry Division was deployed near Tungan and Feite with company-size detachments to the north at Paoching and Jaoho.<sup>20</sup>

Map 34. Soviet 35th Army Advance to Mishan, 9—15 August 1945

Lt. Gen. Zakhvatayev, the 35th Army commander, determined to make his main attack across the Sungacha River in the southern part of the army zone. The 363d Rifle Division on the left and the 66th Rifle Division on the right would cross the river west of Pavlo-Federovka, overcome Japanese outposts east of Lake Khanka, and spearheaded by two tank brigades, advance through the marshy region north of Lake Khanka to secure Mishan and to cut Japanese communications lines to Hutou, thus isolating the fortress. On the north flank of 35th Army, the 264th Rifle Division and 109th Fortified Region would assault across the Ussuri River from Iman to south of Hutou, bypass and isolate the Hutou Fortified Region, advance to occupy Hulin, and ultimately link up with the left flank army divisions at Tungan. The reunited army would then advance on separate axes to Poli and Linkou. The 8th Fortified Region would conduct local attacks across the Ussuri from Lesozavodsk to south of Iman in the army center.<sup>21</sup>



**Zakhvatayev, Nikanor Dmitrievich (1898–1963), 35th Army**

1916—joined Russian Army.  
 1916—Warrant Officers School; commander, regimental machine gun command.  
 1918—joined Red Army.  
 1920—Artillery School; adjutant, artillery battalion.  
 1921—regimental chief of staff; RKKA Inspection Control Group (Military Training); regimental commander.  
 1930—Vystrel course.  
 1935—Frunze Academy.  
 1939—(Sep) senior tactics instructor, General Staff Academy.  
 1941—(Jun) assistant chief of Operations Department, Southwest Front.  
 1941—(Nov) chief of staff, 1st Shock Army (Moscow operations).  
 1942—(May) commander, 1st Guards Rifle Corps (Demiansk operation).  
 1942—(Dec) commander, 12th Guards Rifle Corps.  
 1944—(May) commander, 1st Shock Army.  
 1945—(Mar) commander, 4th Guards Army.  
 1945—(Jul) commander, 35th Army.  
 1946—army commander, chief of staff, Maritime Military District and Belorussian Military District.  
 1951—(Dec) commander, Don Military District.

1953—(Oct) first deputy commander, Belorussian Military District.  
 1955—(Apr) deputy chief of the General Staff.

1957—(Jun) chief military advisor of the Hungarian People's Army.  
 1960—retired.

At 0100 on 9 August, assault detachments of the Soviet 57th Border Guards Detachment crossed the Ussuri and Sungacha rivers on cutters and by 0200 had liquidated Japanese border outposts and secured a beachhead on the west bank of the Sungacha River. After a fifteen-minute artillery preparation, two advanced battalions of the 363d and the 66th Rifle Divisions crossed the river, encountering no enemy opposition.\* Heavy rains and flooding, however, made the area virtually impassable. In order to construct roads, army headquarters provided extra engineer support to both divisions. The 66th Rifle Division penetrated deep into the swamps, advanced twelve kilometers, and reached a point two kilometers northwest of the village of Tachiao around 2000. The 363d Rifle Division finished crossing the Sungacha River at 0900 and, while crossing the swamps at 1100, ran into heavy opposition at Maly Huankang. A company of Japanese troops in

\*Sources disagree as to whether a preparation was fired.

five strongpoints held out against repeated infantry assaults and direct fire from 76-mm regimental guns. At 1900, the 363d Rifle Division finally broke Japanese resistance and continued its advance, reaching the southwest edge of Tachiao at 2300.<sup>22</sup>

On 10 August, the 363d and 66th Rifle Divisions continued their advance northwestward. The advance was rapid, although fuel difficulties and poor terrain forced the tank brigades to withdraw.<sup>23</sup> The two rifle divisions continued: the 363d Rifle Division occupied Mishan late on 12 August, and the 66th Rifle Division occupied Tungan on the thirteenth, thus cutting the highway and railroad to Hutou. Japanese resistance melted away as 135th Infantry Division units received orders to withdraw to Linkou and then to defensive positions at Mutanchiang.



Artillery firing on Japanese positions

On the right flank of 35th Army, 264th Rifle Division and 109th Fortified Region prepared to assault Hutou. After a thirty- to fifty-minute artillery preparation, assault units crossed the Ussuri River south of Hutou. Soviet bombers then pounded the area for two hours and distracted the Japanese defenders. By nightfall on the ninth, the 264th Rifle Division had

outflanked Hutou to the south, captured the railroad depot, and cut the highway to Hulin. The following day the city of Hutou fell, leaving the Japanese isolated in the strong fortifications north and northwest of the city. The 1056th Rifle Regiment (of 264th Rifle Division) and the 109th Fortified Region, supported by heavy artillery units, prepared to reduce the fortress methodically, a difficult process only completed by 18 August. The Soviets claim that 3,000 Japanese perished in the bitter defense of Hutou.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, the main forces of the 264th Rifle Division moved westward along the railroad toward Hulin, covering thirty-five kilometers and securing the city by the afternoon of the twelfth. The 264th Rifle Division joined the remainder of 35th Army at Tungan and Mishan on 13 August.

After the thirteenth, the advance of the 35th Army accelerated against negligible opposition. The 66th Rifle Division, operating with a forward detachment on the Poli axis, dislodged light Japanese opposition, and on the evening of 15 August, the forward detachment occupied Poli. The main force of the 66th Rifle Division arrived on the seventeenth, followed on the nineteenth by units of 5th Separate Rifle Corps, 2d Far Eastern Front, which had crossed the mountains from Paoching. The 363d Rifle Division of 35th Army operated on the Linkou axis, employing the 125th Tank Brigade (railed from Pavlo-Federovka by way of Iman) as a forward detachment. The 363d Rifle Division passed through Chihsi on 17 August and arrived at Linkou 19–20 August, relieving forces of 1st Red Banner Army, which had arrived six days earlier. The 35th Army completed its active operations by 19 August and turned to the task of taking the surrender of Japanese units.

In the southern portion of the 1st Far Eastern Front sector of operations, 25th Army of Col. Gen. Chistyakov deployed for attack along two principal axes (see map 35). The 39th Rifle Corps (three rifle divisions) and the 259th Tank Brigade backed by the 72d Tank Brigade (shifted from 5th Army) prepared to attack in a sector north of Novogeorgievka station. The mission of 39th Rifle Corps was to secure or isolate the Tungning Fortified Region, to seize the city of Tungning, and to take the city of Wangching, thus cutting Japanese communications from Korea to Manchuria. On the army's left flank, border guards units and units of the 108th and 113th Fortified Regions would force the Hunchun and Tumen rivers to operate against Japanese defenses in Korea and at Hunchun, Manchuria. In the wide central sector between the 39th Rifle Corps and the 108th Fortified Region positions, the 106th, 109th, 110th, and 111th Fortified Regions would conduct attacks on local Japanese border installations. The 88th Rifle Corps of two divisions (front reserve) would prepare to conduct exploitation operations southward along the eastern coast of Korea to secure the ports of Unggi, Najin, and Chongjin.<sup>25</sup>

Japanese forces of First Area Army and 3d Army opposed the Soviet 25th Army. In First Area Army sector, the 132d Independent Mixed Brigade (four infantry battalions and one raider battalion) was stationed at Tung-

ning and garrisoned the Tungning Fortified Region, which stretched thirty kilometers north-south along the border east of the city of Tungning (see map 36). The 128th Infantry Division had its headquarters and two infantry regiments in the immediate area of Lotzokou, eighty kilometers southwest of Tungning. The third regiment was at Tachienchang, eighty kilometers due west of Tungning. Small Japanese border posts ran south along the border from Tungning to the Sea of Japan. The 3d Army zone contained three infantry divisions, a mobile brigade, and a separate infantry regiment. The 112th Infantry Division was deployed north of the Tumen River, west of Hunchun, with forward elements extending along the railroad to Tumen-tzu. The 79th Infantry Division was positioned in a sector southeast of Tumen, and the 127th Infantry Division defended west of the Tumen River and south of the 79th Infantry Division sector with advanced units of its 280th Infantry Regiment forward in a fortified zone on the border near Wuchaitzu. The 101st Separate Regiment was at Chongliak, north of Unggi, Korea. The 1st Mobile Brigade was stationed on the main rail line at Shih-liping, east of Wangching, with advanced elements farther east at Tumen-tzu.<sup>26</sup>



**Chistyakov, Ivan Mikhailovich (1900—1979), 25th Army**

1919—joined Red Army; corporal, assistant platoon commander.  
 1920—machine gun school.  
 1921—platoon and battalion commander; assistant rifle regiment commander.  
 1927, 1930—*Vystrel* course.  
 1936—rifle regiment commander.  
 1936—rifle division commander.  
 1939—assistant rifle corps commander.  
 1940—commander, Vladivostok Infantry School.  
 1941—rifle corps commander.  
 1942—commander, 64th Rifle Brigade (Moscow operation); commander, 8th Guards Rifle Division; commander, 2d Guards Rifle Corps.  
 1942—(Oct) commander, 21st Army (Apr 1943 renamed 6th Guards Army) (Stalingrad, Kursk, Belgorod-Kharkov, Belorussia, Memel, Courland operations).  
 1945—commander, 25th Army.  
 1946—various command positions.  
 1954—first deputy commander, Trans-Baikal Military District.  
 1957—general inspector, Inspectorate of Ground Forces.  
 1968—retired.

In order to deceive the Japanese as to Soviet attack intentions, the 39th Rifle Corps of 25th Army occupied final attack positions as late as possible on the evening of 8 August. In consultation with his superiors and subordinates, General Chistyakov decided to begin the attack by employing assault detachments formed from the fortified regions and border guards units. He chose these units because they were familiar with the terrain and the individual Japanese positions opposing them and because they had been well trained on special training grounds in the Soviet rear. One advanced battalion from each lead rifle regiment would follow the assault group, and a tank brigade would follow to spearhead the advance after Soviet forces had penetrated Japanese positions.<sup>27</sup> In a further attempt to gain surprise, the 39th Rifle Corps would fire no artillery preparation.



Map 35. Soviet 25th Army Advance to Wangching and Yenchi, 9-17 August 1945

Assault groups and advanced battalions occupied jumping off positions at 2330, just as light rain began to fall. At 2400 sappers began cutting through the barbed wire along the border as the rain intensified. Shortly after midnight on the ninth, Marshal Meretskov, the front commander, gave the go-ahead for the attack, despite the torrential rains, which would continue falling until around 0600. Although the rain hindered movement, it also contributed to surprise, because the Japanese thought an attack in



Soviet assault forces occupy "Red" Hill (25th Army Sector)

such conditions was impossible. At 0100 on 9 August, sappers and assault units crossed the borders and hit enemy positions. Because Japanese defenders had heard little else but rainfall for almost an hour, their forward positions were taken by surprise and captured or quickly subdued.<sup>28</sup> By 0300 advanced battalions pushed forward on the path of the assault detachments. With the 259th Tank Brigade in the lead, main force units of the 40th and 105th Rifle Divisions advanced at 0830 on an axis westward along the Pad Sennaya River valley to the north of the principal fortified positions of the Tungning Fortified Region.



By day's end on 9 August, 39th Rifle Corps forces had advanced ten to twelve kilometers into the Japanese rear on the Pad Sennaya axis, and lead elements, reinforced by the 72d Tank Brigade, were beginning the struggle for the town of Tungning and the vital railroad line to Tumen. Other Soviet units from fortified regions advanced on Japanese positions along the border south of Tungning at Tsingen and farther south at Paitoashantzu and Tumentzu.

Soviet forces continued their advance on 10 August against stiffening Japanese resistance. General Onitake, commander of the 132d Independent Mixed Brigade, left units from his forward battalions in the fortified region and, with his remaining forces, withdrew towards the west.<sup>29</sup> On the afternoon of the tenth, lead elements of 259th Tank Brigade and 40th Rifle Division entered Tungning, while the second echelon division (384th) of 39th Rifle Corps fought to reduce the Tungning Fortified Region. Further assistance came from the north when 17th Rifle Corps, 5th Army, attacked southward in the rear of the Suifenhao center of resistance, ultimately joining 39th Rifle Corps west of Tungning. At 1700 on 9 August, Marshal Meretskov subordinated 17th Rifle Corps, with its two rifle divisions, to 25th Army.

At this point, Marshal Meretskov reassessed the situation and determined that his best chance for successful exploitation in the front zone would be in the 25th Army area. Although 5th Army had won the border battles, it still faced the main force of the Japanese 124th, 126th, and 135th Infantry Divisions between Muleng and Mutanchiang. Consequently, Marshal Meretskov ordered attachment of 88th Rifle Corps (two rifle divisions) to 25th Army for operations in the southern portion of the army zone and indicated future commitment into the 25th Army zone of the front mobile group (the 10th Mechanized Corps), if 25th Army's progress warranted it.<sup>30</sup> Progress of 25th Army was promising. On 10 August, 39th Rifle Corps completed clearing enemy forces out of the Tungning area and began coordinating with 17th Rifle Corps for an advance west and southwest in pursuit of the withdrawing Japanese. On the eleventh, that coordinated advance began with the 17th and 30th Rifle Corps units moving along the road from Tungning toward Wangching, Tumen, Tunhua, and Kirin. By noon on the twelfth, the two corps had marched thirty to forty kilometers southwest. Pleased by the progress thus far, Marshal Meretskov ordered 10th Mechanized Corps to exploit through the 25th Army zone to Wangching and beyond.

On 13 and 14 August, 17th Rifle Corps, 39th Rifle Corps, and 10th Mechanized Corps advanced southwestward, sharing a single road along the military rail line through the mountainous, heavily wooded area from Laoheishan to Heitosai. Mine clearing, bridge repair, and road renovation required considerable engineer support. Because of the restricted movement along a single road, only reconnaissance units and forward detachments of the corps came into contact with the Japanese. By nightfall on the fourteenth, units had advanced some five to fifty kilometers, and march columns

extended a considerable distance to the rear. Japanese resistance was negligible. The 132d Independent Mixed Brigade completed its withdrawal westward to Tachienchang. The 128th Infantry Division prepared to defend in the Lotzokou area and in the Taipingling Pass farther to the west. The Japanese command had lost an opportunity to disrupt the Soviet advance as it maneuvered through the bottleneck between Laoheishan and Heitosai.<sup>31</sup>

At Heitosai the Soviet advance divided into two separate columns. The 17th Rifle Corps with elements of 10th Mechanized Corps, including 72d Mechanized Brigade acting as a forward detachment, drove westward from Heitosai towards the Taipingling Pass. The 39th Rifle Corps, with 257th Tank Brigade as forward detachment and elements of 10th Mechanized Corps with 72d Tank Brigade in the lead, marched southwestward from Heitosai toward Wangching. On 15 August, 17th Rifle Corps confronted elements of the 284th Infantry Regiment of the Japanese 128th Infantry Division at Lotzokou west of Heitosai. The 187th Rifle Division attacked the Japanese head on, while the 366th Rifle Division enveloped the defenders from the south. The forward detachment (72d Mechanized Brigade) bypassed the Japanese positions and drove westward to Taipingling Pass, where it battled 285th Infantry Regiment, 128th Infantry Division.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, farther south 72d Tank Brigade and 10th Mechanized Corps with 259th Tank Brigade of 39th Rifle Corps advanced toward Wangching. At Shih-liping the forward detachment and 40th Rifle Division engaged elements of the Japanese 1st Mobile Brigade. After a brief, bitter fight, Soviet units drove off the Japanese and continued the march.<sup>33</sup> The forward detachment of 39th Rifle Corps secured Wangching at 1700 on 15 August. The remainder of 10th Mechanized Corps and 39th Rifle Corps stretched out along the road for 210 kilometers to the rear. Lead elements of the main body of 39th Rifle Corps reached Chintsang, thirty kilometers east of Wangching, with the main force still stretching well to the rear through Heitosai.

The offensive of 25th Army and 10th Mechanized Corps reached a climax the following day. Led by a forward detachment of 187th Rifle Division and 72d Mechanized Brigade, the 17th Rifle Corps fought for possession of the Taipingling Pass. In the evening, the combined efforts of 187th Rifle Division, 366th Rifle Division, and 72d Mechanized Brigade of 10th Mechanized Corps drove the Japanese from the area and secured the pass.<sup>34</sup> The same day, lead elements of the 257th Tank Brigade with small elements of 39th Rifle Corps advanced twenty kilometers southeast of Wangching toward Tumen, while main forces of the corps arrived in Wangching. The leading element of 10th Mechanized Corps, the 72d Tank Brigade, developed the attack twenty kilometers southwest of Wangching toward Yenchi.

In the southern portion of the army zone, the situation also developed favorably. On the first day of attack, advanced units of the 108th and 113th Fortified Regions captured Japanese positions across the Hunchun and Tumen rivers, securing a foothold in the Hunchun and Wuchaitzu Fortified Regions and a bridgehead over the Tumen River at Kyonghung, north of

the old 1938 battlefield at Lake Khasan. Soviet forces bypassed the Japanese 280th Infantry Regiment and left it isolated in positions at Shangchiaoshen, northwest of Wuchaitzu.<sup>35</sup> On 11 August the attack gained momentum when 25th Army committed an additional force to support the fortified regions in the attack. The 88th Rifle Corps (386th and 258th Rifle Divisions) advanced on the Hunchun-Tumen axis, while the 393d Rifle Division (minus the 541st Rifle Regiment) reinforced the 113th Fortified Region, fighting along the northeast coast of Korea.

Early on the morning of 12 August, the 393d Rifle Division conducted a truck-mounted attack through the lines of the 113th Fortified Region against the Japanese 101st Separate Regiment south of Chonghak. The 101st Regiment withdrew westward to Hoeryong, where it came under 127th Infantry Division control. Within three hours at 0900, advanced elements of 393d Rifle Division assisted a naval task force in securing the port of Unggi. Leaving one battalion as a garrison, the division continued to the port of Najin, which it occupied on 14 August. Active operations in Korea ended on 16 August, when the 393d Rifle Division battled for and secured a mountain pass twelve kilometers north of Chongjin and then at 1500 advanced to the city, where it united with the 355th Rifle Division, which had conducted a successful amphibious assault on the port city.<sup>36</sup>

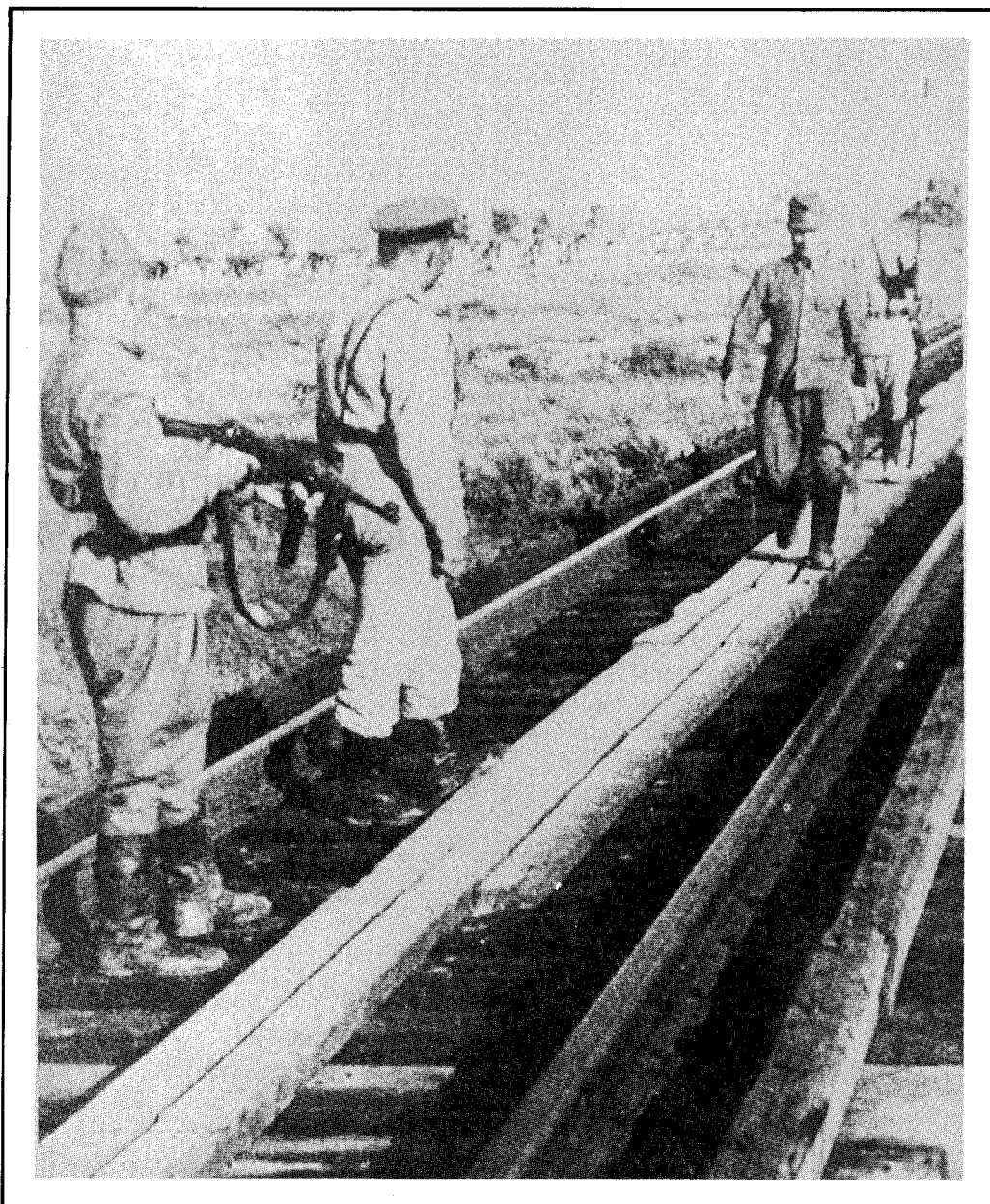
Farther north, on the Hunchun-Tumen axis, the 88th Rifle Corps joined the action in support of the 113th Fortified Region, whose forces by 14 August had secured Hunchun and had advanced toward the Inanho River ten kilometers to the northwest against heavy opposition from the Japanese 112th Infantry Division. On the fifteenth, 386th Rifle Division of 88th Rifle Corps, supported by the 209th Tank Brigade (detached from 35th Army on 10 August and sent southward to 25th Army), joined the 113th Fortified Region forces and drove across the Inanho River, where it ran into strongly entrenched Japanese forces of the 246th Infantry Regiment of the 112th Infantry Division. Several attempts to dislodge the Japanese failed. Thus, late in the day, the 258th Rifle Division from corps second echelon crossed the Tumen River at Hunyong to attack the Japanese right flank. Japanese positions south of the Tumen River ran along the heights from Unmupi to Mayusan, where four battalions of 291st Regiment, 79th Infantry Division, had dug in to defend. The Soviet attack sought to turn the flank of this Japanese force. The next day, 258th Rifle Division continued to drive westward, south of the Tumen River, against heavy opposition from Japanese forces holding the hills southwest of Mayusan. Other forces of the 113th Fortified Region extended their operations eastward on the right flank of 386th Rifle Division in an attempt to turn the left flank of the Japanese 112th Infantry Division. This maneuver brought Soviet forces into contact with the 247th and 248th Regiments of the 112th Infantry Division. Both Japanese units held their positions.<sup>37</sup> Thus, on the night of 17 August, Japanese forces in the Tumen-Yenchi area faced envelopment by 25th Army from north, east, and south, and confronted the possibility of total isolation from other Japanese forces in Korea and Manchuria.

Farther north in the 25th Army zone, Japanese defenses continued to crumble. The 17th Rifle Corps, with elements of the 10th Mechanized Corps, moved westward, pursuing fragments of the 128th Infantry Division from the Taipingling Pass. Advanced elements of 72d Tank Brigade, 10th Mechanized Corps, approached Yenchi from the north, while the main body of the corps approached Wangching. Lead elements of 39th Rifle Corps with 259th Tank Brigade approached Tumen from the north, while the corps main body moved slowly westward along the road to Wangching. Last, but not least, 88th Rifle Corps approached Tumen from the east. On the seventeenth the ring around the Japanese 112th and 79th Infantry Divisions closed. Forward elements of 10th Mechanized Corps moved sixty kilometers from Taipingling Pass and secured the critical rail and road junction at Tahsingkou (twenty kilometers north of Wangching). Other elements of 10th Mechanized Corps that were operating with 72d Tank Brigade south of Wangching battled the Japanese 127th Infantry Division forces at Nianyansun, fourteen kilometers north of Yenchi. Forward units of 39th Rifle Corps operating with 259th Tank Brigade advanced southeast of Wangching, secured the important city of Tumen, and by so doing cut the escape routes of the Japanese 112th and 79th Infantry Divisions. On the seventeenth, 88th Rifle Corps pushed aside the 291st Infantry Regiment at Mayusan and occupied Onsang, ten kilometers east of Tumen.<sup>38</sup> Remaining Japanese units surrendered or fled into the hills south of the Tumen River.

With Japanese surrender pending, 25th Army units consolidated their hold on northeastern Korea on the eighteenth and sent the 10th Mechanized Corps westward toward its objectives at Tunhua and Kirin. Forward elements of the northern prong of 10th Mechanized Corps, followed by 17th Rifle Corps, drove almost thirty kilometers northwest to join units of 5th Army at Tungchingcheng, where the main rail lines from Mutanchiang and Wangching met. The 39th Rifle Corps and 88th Rifle Corps continued to clear northeastern Korea south of Yenchi and Tumen. On the nineteenth, 10th Mechanized Corps continued to advance westward, rapidly crossed the passes of the Laoilin Mountain range, and arrived at Tunhua at nightfall of the same day that Chongjin on the Korean coast fell to the 393d and 355th Rifle Divisions. The Kwantung Army's surrender, broadcast by radio to the Japanese units the day before, was beginning to take effect as individual Japanese units surrendered to the advanced formations of the Soviet 1st Far Eastern Front.

On the eighteenth Marshal Vasilevsky ordered all Soviet units in Manchuria (including the 1st Far Eastern Front zone and other front areas) to secure major population centers with special mobile units created from each major formation.<sup>39</sup> The 1st Far Eastern Front landed small detachments of troops at the airfields at Harbin and Kirin to arrange with Japanese authorities the surrender of Japanese garrisons.<sup>40</sup> By 20 August four forward detachments from advancing units of 1st Far Eastern Front had joined the air-landed units at the two cities. Elements of 15th Army, 2d Far Eastern Front, arrived in Harbin the same day on boats of the Amur River Flotilla.

In the southern region of 25th Army sector, units of 88th Rifle Corps and 10th Mechanized Corps moved southward into Korea, by the end of August reaching the 38th parallel, the line agreed upon by Soviet and American authorities for separating their occupation forces.



Capitulation of Japanese forces

The last organized Japanese resistance in the 1st Far Eastern Front sector was finally snuffed out on 26 August. Positions in the Tungning Fortified Region had held out since 9 August under constant pounding by units from 106th Fortified Region, supported by the 223d High Powered Separate Artillery Brigade, the 34th and 100th Special Powered Artillery Battalions, and aircraft. These units systematically reduced eighty-two strong-points, the last of which, the Shiminzas strongpoint, fell on 25 August. At Tungning, 901 Japanese soldiers and auxiliaries became prisoners.<sup>41</sup> Other incidents occurred as Japanese units who did not receive, or who received but did not obey, the surrender order continued to engage Soviet troops.

The offensive of the 1st Far Eastern Front complemented well the audacious advance of the Trans-Baikal Front. By successfully tying down significant Japanese forces in eastern Manchuria, Japanese attention was distracted from the west. In the west, the Japanese could contemplate no action other than a withdrawal to interior defensive lines. By operating in strength in weather considered unsuitable for operations, by capitalizing on surprise, and by attacking on axes across terrain considered unfit for significant operations, the Soviets put massive pressure on Japanese units along the entire eastern front. That unrelenting pressure overwhelmed forward Japanese units and prevented consolidation of Japanese units on new defensive lines to the rear. Thus, the defense by the 135th, 126th, and 124th Infantry Divisions east of Mutanchiang, the defense by the 128th Infantry Division and 1st Mobile Brigade from Taipingling south, and the defense by the 112th and 79th Infantry Divisions east of Tumen proved unsuccessful. Here, as elsewhere in Manchuria, the mobility, firepower, and use of armor and artillery decided the issue. Forward detachments of reinforced tank brigades swept through and around Japanese defensive lines, preempting any systematic defense. Follow-on rifle forces crushed or bypassed any established defenses.

The fall of Mutanchiang and Wangching on 16 August assured Soviet success. The lack of armor and of antitank capability had an enormously negative effect on the Japanese, because they could not counter Soviet armored thrusts. In vain the Japanese relied on terrain, its impact on Soviet logistics, and suicidal expenditures of infantry to slow the Soviets. Japanese border fortified regions put up a tenacious, brave, yet meaningless, defense. At Hutou, at Tungning, and, to a lesser extent, at Suifenho, Japanese garrisons fought to the point of extermination or exhaustion. Yet, even their gallant defense of these areas did little to stem the Soviet tide that bypassed the fortified positions and swept on to seize objectives deep in the Japanese rear area. Here in eastern Manchuria, as in the west, the Japanese High Command had woefully underestimated Soviet offensive capability and maneuverability, and it cost the Japanese dearly.